

HICKORY FARMS COMMUNITY NEWSLETTER

March 2021 Edition



HICKORYFARMS.ORG

P.O. BOX 2239, FAIRFAX VA 22031

HFCA BOARD & VOLUNTEERS

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MESSAGE FROM NEW ACTING HFCA BoD PRESIDENT

By Sean Coleman

Hello, I am Sean Coleman, and I am honored that the HFCA Board, at its meeting on February 9th selected me as the new Acting President of the Homeowner's Association. There has been some significant turnover on the Board recently. I would encourage all of you to consider joining the Board or finding another way to contribute to the neighborhood.

I want to acknowledge Bruce and Nancy Bernhardt as they leave the neighborhood. Bruce is a former President of the Association and was on the Board with me in the late 1990s when we were both new arrivals to Hickory Farms. Bruce and Nancy have been stalwarts in the neighborhood, and we wish them well as they transition to Florida to be closer to their family.

Even though I write this in the middle of a sleet storm, I know that Spring is just around the corner. We have tulips that have started poking their way out of the ground; they are just waiting for a string of warm weather to start to grow. Melissa Stark, the Board member who oversees the common areas, will be organizing multiple spring clean-ups. The first one is March 28, to help get the common areas ready for the growing season and for all of us to use. Please consider helping her when the time comes. If everyone does a little, no one has to do a lot to help keep our neighborhood beautiful. Communication about these events and others will come out in future newsletters, the community listserv, and through NextDoor. If you are not yet on the Community List Serve, please register here <https://hickoryfarms.org/hickory-farms-listserv>. It is an easy way to stay in touch with things happening in the Community.

Also on our website is a neighborhood directory. This is a wonderful tool to help you stay connected or find a neighbor. The directory is locked so only people in the neighborhood can access it. If you have not yet had a chance to put your contact information in please take the opportunity to do so.

I want to thank everyone for getting their annual dues in. For the second year in a row, we have had 100% compliance with this. The Community's budget is small, so it is vital that we achieve that mark. In the survey we did in 2018, the Board asked if electronic payment of the annual dues were something the Community would be interested in, and 80% said yes. The Board started that, and this year about 10% of the Community paid that way.

The Fairfax County Health Department has a registration portal for the Covid-19 vaccine. They are currently working through the backlog at about 3,000 new people a day getting the vaccine in Fairfax. The County is currently working on category 1b, which "residents ages 65+ and people ages 16-64 with underlying medical conditions, as well as to health care personnel and childcare workers (center-based or licensed/ permitted home-based), and K-12 teachers or staff members who live or work in the Fairfax Health District." The registration portal is <https://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/health/novel-coronavirus/vaccine>. Supervisor Walkinshaw puts out a lot of information in his Braddock Beacon newsletter and his advisories. You can register to receive them here.

JOIN OUR LISTSERV

There's no better way to stay in touch than through our Hickory Farms email listserv. Visit hickoryfarms.org, click "Email Listserv" in the "For Residents" menu and follow the instructions.



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BIRDS OF HICKORY FARMS

By: Bob Cosgriff

We ended January with 31 species seen in/over our yard, the last bird being a Cooper's Hawk. Our daily average remains 21 species, with a high day of 25 and a low day of 16. February is typically a slow month for seeing new species. Most of the birds that remain here in the winter have already been counted. Nonetheless, there can be some surprises. A male Red-winged Blackbird showed up on 7 February and a Hermit Thrush appeared on 15 February. A male Pileated Woodpecker and a Northern Flicker made belated appearances late in the month, bringing our total to 35 (one species less than our all-time end-of-February high of 36, achieved in 2020) and roughly half the number of species we can expect to see by year's end. It is entirely possible we will be at 40 or more species by the time the spring migration begins in April, bringing in waves of warblers and other beautiful neo-tropical songbirds.

One question people often ask about bird feeders is whether birds become reliant upon them for food during the winter. The consensus among ornithologists who have conducted experiments to test this theory is that birds use feeders to supplement, not replace, natural food sources. Using feeders might give them a better chance to survive extreme weather, thus leading to better breeding success in the spring, but the research is not conclusive on this point. It is estimated that birds obtain perhaps 20% of their winter food needs from feeders. However, they can survive without them. So if you do have feeders and miss a day or two before refilling them, don't worry: the birds will adapt and use natural sources of food.

On the morning of 23 February, I noticed a male and female bluebird on box #5 near the sledding hill. This was a perfect reminder for us to go out and clean the bluebird boxes in preparation for the nesting season. This is the time that the bluebirds are beginning to select their boxes and establish their territories.

Even though we removed nesting material last fall after the breeding season, bluebirds and other species use the boxes in the winter for shelter from the cold weather. As a result, so there are always lots of droppings and eathers in the boxes by this time of year. These need to be removed to avoid fostering bacteria that could harm nesting birds and hatchlings.

I'm happy to report that all 10 boxes are clean and ready for occupancy!

The date of first egg laying varies for our bluebird trail, but is typically between 26 March and 5 April. We will start actively monitoring the boxes on 21 March. In a typical year, birds can produce two clutches totaling eight to 10 hatchlings. In good years, third clutches are possible. On occasion, six eggs can be laid, but four or five is the average for the first clutch, with second clutches usually three or four. A lot depends on the reproductive vigor of the bluebird pair. Last year, predation by House Sparrows resulted in lower-than-normal numbers of fledged bluebirds. We are hoping for a better outcome this year. In addition to bluebirds, other species that use our boxes include Tree Swallows, Carolina Chickadees, and Carolina Wrens. We will be watching to see if Tree Swallows return to Hickory Farms after not nesting here in the previous three years, so stay tuned.

So despite the ice and cold of February, by the time you read this article, we will have reached "meteorological spring" (1 March) and be just a few weeks from "astronomical spring" (this year falling on 20 March). Even better, we will shortly be into Daylight Savings Time (14 March), giving everyone more hours of sunlight to enjoy the birds of Hickory Farms!



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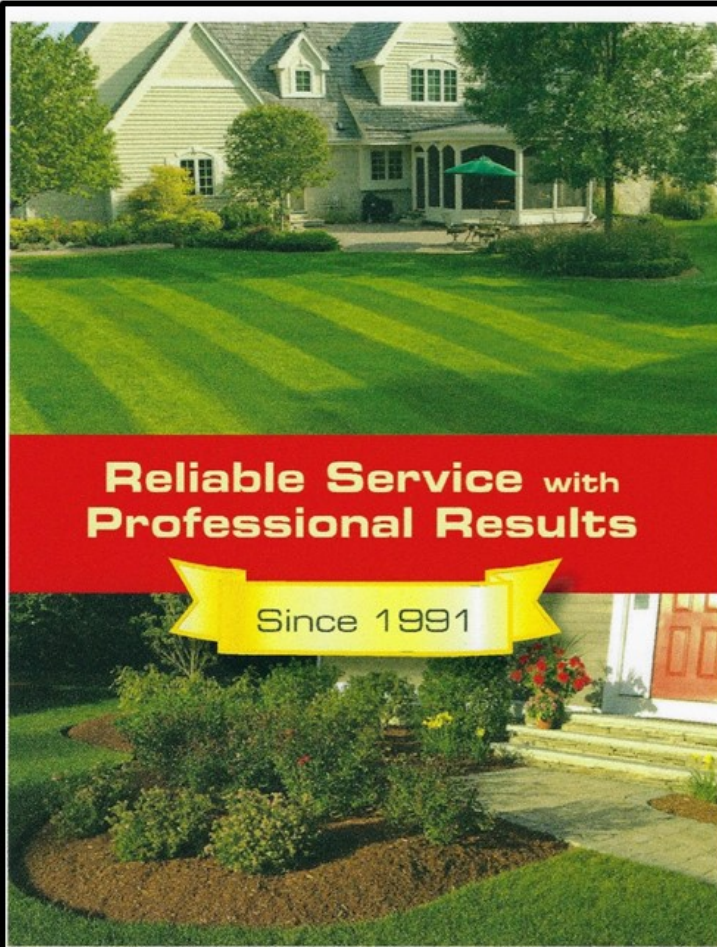
MARCH HFCA BOARD MEETING

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, Hickory Farms Board Meetings are now conducted using the Zoom audio/video conference application. That means that every Hickory Farms Community Association member can observe their Board in action without leaving home! The next HFCA Board meeting will be held Tuesday, 09 March at 7pm. To join the meeting, contact any HFCA Board Member or send a request to join to hfca@hickoryfarms.org. You will also be provided with the Zoom meeting URL, meeting number and passcode.

Hickory Farms has a strong and consistent history of transparency regarding access by members to Board Meetings and the challenges facing our community. Please consider attending the Board Meeting so that you are fully informed with the issues facing our neighborhood!

WANT TO CONTACT THE BOARD?

Board of Directors: hfca@hickoryfarms.org
 Architectural Control Committee: acc@hickoryfarms.org
 President: president@hickoryfarms.org
 Treasurer: treasurer@hickoryfarms.org
 Common Areas: commonareas@hickoryfarms.org
 Webmaster: webmaster@hickoryfarms.org
 Social Committee: social@hickoryfarms.org
 Secretary: secretary@hickoryfarms.org



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STUDENT YELLOW PAGES

If you offer services such as raking leaves, lawn mowing, babysitting, general home maintenance, dog walking, tutoring, etc., please email Bill at berg_bill@yahoo.com to be included.

Bridgette Buchanan (17)	703-307-7323	Babysitting and dog sitting
Britney Mulliner (17)	571-474-7277	Babysitting and dog sitting
Cody Dempster (17)	703-776-0101	Yard work, snow shoveling, housework
Dominic Cannata (17)	703-568-9896	Lawn mowing, shovel snow, cleaning, mulching
Kiera Stark (11)	commonareas@hickoryfarms.org	Pet sitting, plant/tree watering, weed picking and leaf raking
Kent Codding (18)	703-317-7319	Shovel snow, yard work, leaf raking
Paul Cannata (18)	786-445-5318	Lawn mowing, shovel snow, cleaning, mulching
Xavier Gilmer (15)	703-862-2192	Shovel snow; lawn mowing
Jaden Singh (17)	703-278-8800	Math tutoring, snow shoveling
George Codding (14)	703-223-4101	Snow shovel, yard work, leaf raking



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HOW TO MULCH YOUR GARDEN | TYPES OF MULCH

Mulching is a fundamental part of gardening to keep plants looking beautiful and productive through the year. If you don't already know how to mulch, it's important to learn when to mulch, the right depth for mulch, and the right type of mulch.

WHAT IS MULCH?

At its simplest, mulch is any material that covers the soil's surface. In nature, mulch is simply fallen leaves and plant debris. In the garden, mulch can also include compost, wood chips, rotted manure, cardboard, or even seaweed.

It's only recently that we've come to appreciate mulch's sustainable and ecological benefits. Done correctly, mulching feeds our soil's living microorganisms with nutrients and the waste from these tiny microbes creates healthier soil structure for plants, limiting compaction.

BENEFITS OF MULCHING

- Reduces weed growth by keeping light from reaching the soil surface.
- Reduces water loss from the soil surface, which helps maintain soil moisture.
- Moderates soil temperatures, keeping it warmer on cold nights and cooler on hot days.
- Protects bare soil, reducing erosion and soil compaction.
- Protects plants from the harsh conditions of winter freezes, thaws, and winds.

- In winter, soil under mulch will be warmer than unprotected soil. This protects plants from the cycle of freezing and thawing (which can heave them out of the ground).
- Prevents crusting of the soil surface. Water moves more readily into soil covered with mulch instead of running off.
- Keeps soil from splashing onto leaves; keeping soil off leaves reduces the chance of plants getting fungal and bacterial diseases.
- Breaks down and feeds the soil (if organic mulch).
- Improves the structure of clay soils and the moisture-holding capacity of sandy soils.
- Slowly increases soil fertility (if organic) and may make micronutrients already in the soil more available.
- Warms the soil in spring, allowing the gardener to plant days or weeks before the soil would normally be ready.
- Keeps plants clean and off the ground, especially tomatoes and melons, to avoid plant disease.
- Limits the chance of damaging trees' trunks when mulch is placed around them instead of grass.
- Improves plant health and growth (due to fewer weeds and more consistent moisture and soil temperature).
- Makes gardens "spiffed up" and attractive, giving a uniform appearance and rhythm to garden design.

DISADVANTAGES OF MULCHING

Although using mulch has many benefits, in some cases, its use can be detrimental to the garden:

- Too much mulch (a layer more than 3 inches deep) can bury and suffocate plants; water and oxygen can't reach the roots. A layer of 2 to 3 inches of mulch is ample. Do NOT over mulch.
- Mulch can contribute to rotting bark if piled up around the trunks of trees and shrubs. Keep mulch 6 to 12 inches away from the base of woody plants. No more "volcano" mulching around trees! Keeping mulch away from the trunk discourages wood-boring insects, gnawing rodents, and decay.
- Mulch near plant stems is the perfect place for [slugs](#), snails, tunneling rodents, and more pests to reside. Sprinkle wood ashes or diatomaceous earth around the base of precious plants to keep the slugs and snails at bay.
- Mulch can bake your plants with excess heat in midsummer if not done properly. (See more below.)
- Light-colored, wood-based mulches, like sawdust or fresh wood chips, can steal nitrogen from the soil as they break down. Counter this effect by adding a nitrogen-rich fertilizer, such as soybean meal, alfalfa, or cottonseed meal, to the mulch. ([Learn more about soil amendments.](#))

HOW MUCH MULCH IS NEEDED?

With most organic mulches, a layer of 2 to 3 inches is plenty. The finer the material, the thinner the layer needed.

Citation: <https://www.almanac.com/types-mulch-advantages-and-disadvantages-mulching#:~:text=Benefits%20of%20Mulching,reducing%20erosion%20and%20soil%20compaction>

VOLUNTEER NOW TO BE A BLOCK REP!

Block Reps further bring our community together by working with the Social Committee to get to know current residents, greet new neighbors and help plan and spread the word about fun events for Hickory Farms. If you're interested in being a Rep, please email Sarah Tropiano at sarahrtropiano@gmail.com. We'll get together (virtually) soon to start preparing to bring our people together when warmer weather arrives.

SAVE THE DATE! COMMON AREAS ACTIVITIES & VOLUNTEER EVENTS

The CAC team has lots of volunteer activities and events planned for spring and into summer! We welcome everyone to join & participate in these fun events. Sign Ups will be sent via the Listserv & Nextdoor!

Northern Path Clean Up & Roberts Rd. Trash Pick Up

This event will have a little bit of everything. Trash, stick and leaf clean up. Removing some invasive vines from small seedling trees. Please bring your own gloves for this event.

When: Saturday, March 20th from 0900-1100 Rain date: Saturday, March 27th from 0900-1100

Where: Northern Path by Roberts Rd.

Thinning the Upper Commons Meadow

Grab your shovel & gloves, we will be thinning out some of the natives that propagate in abundance to transplant in the Rabbit Run Meadow.

When: Saturday, April 10th from 0800-1100

Where: Upper Commons Main Island - Meadow

Hickory Farms Bird Hike with Bob and Judy Cosgriff

Come out and take part in a bird walk in our common areas with Bob and Judy Cosgriff during the peak weekend of spring migration. Learn the basics of bird identification, what is involved in monitoring the Hickory Farms bluebird trail, and get information on how to attract birds to your yard. Binoculars and a field guide are recommended, but not required. Curious kids welcome! Even though the walk is outdoors, we will wear masks and practice social distancing. The goal will be to see 20 species of birds.

When: Saturday, May 8th from 0900-1000

Where: Rabbit Run, by the Little Free Library at the intersection of Farm House Ln. & Cotton Farm Rd.

Native Perennials Gardens & Wildlife Benefits – How to Introduce Natives to Your Yard

When: Saturday, June 12th at 0900

Where: Upper Commons, Little Free Library off of Farm House Ln

Invasive Management – Cutting & Removing Vines & Tree Seedlings

Help clear out some of the vines & invasive tree seedlings that are within our commons. A learning experience on invasive management & eradication.

When: TBD

Where: TBD

Be on the lookout for these pop-up events throughout March – October via the Listserv & Nextdoor. This is a join if you able type of event. Gloves will be required & a limited number of hand and tree pruners will be provided.

UPDATE FROM THE HFCA BOARD NOMINATING COMMITTEE

Per the Nominating Committee's request noted in the January and February Newsletters, the Nominations Committee did receive one written expression of interest by a homeowner to serve on the Board: Sean Coleman, a lawyer who practiced in Fairfax City by profession, a former Vice-President of HFCA's Board in the mid-late 1990s, and a former President of the Braddock District Council of all local homeowner association.

At its February 9th monthly Board Meeting, Interim President Kathie Schmidt asked to serve instead as a Member-At-Large, which was agreed to by the Board. Sean Coleman, who attended the Board Meeting, was voted by the Board to serve as Acting President until an election could be held. It was discussed and agreed that the election of a new Board should take place (with proxies as usual) during an Annual Meeting, as soon as practicable. The Board had a strong preference for a normal in-person Annual Meeting, rather than a digital one with electronic voting involved. Given the continuing COVID-19 constraints, vaccination uncertainties, and the lead time needed to announce and prepare for such, the Board agreed that it will plan for this being possible by this Fall.